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Individualism and Collectivism

THE PRIMARY CAUSES OF THE
EUROPEAN CONFLICT

ADDRESS

BY

HON. FRED DUMONT SMITH
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Before the Fortieth Annual Meeting of the Kansas
State Historical Society, October 19, 1915,
Memorial Building, Topeka, Kan.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: When your secretary, Mr. Connelley, drafted me, the other day, as a substitute* for Henry Allen—believe me, not an easy task—I asked him what I was expected to talk about. He suggested Kansas, but I said to him that I had been talking about Kansas for about thirty years and had said everything about her, good or bad, that I could think of. I have banned her and blessed her, praised her and cursed her, and everything that I have said about her was true, for such is our beloved state that the wildest eulogy or the bitterest abuse of this year may become the commonplaces of next year's statistics. He told me that politics is barred, for which I am thankful. If there is one subject on which I am profoundly indifferent it is politics. I do not care whether the tariff on beans is two cents *ad valorem* or five cents a pound. I do not even care whether the next Republican candidate for President is Weeks, of Massachusetts, or W. R. Stubbs, of Lawrence—and I submit to you that human indifference could go no farther than that. So the subject was left to my choice.

A few years ago I retired from the world—not exactly to a cell, but to a law office—and for four years I have never raised my voice in public except to a jury or to a judge, and if I shall fail to collect and present in

* Hon. Henry J. Allen was to deliver the annual address, but was called to New York to take part in the campaign for woman suffrage in that state. The secretary then drafted Mr. Smith.

a logical way the facts I desire to to-night I may perhaps be excused.

In my retirement a friend occasionally sends me a book. My friends are not like the chorus girl who wanted to give the leading lady a present and was in doubt. She asked another girl, who said: "Well, give her a book." "My Lord!" said the first girl, "she's got a book now."

So the other day a friend of mine sent me "Germany and England," being a series of lectures delivered by Professor Cramb, of Queen's College, London, in February, 1913. The author did not live even to revise his work, and the lectures come to us as they were delivered, without notes. The book is remarkable for the exaltation of its style, but still more remarkable as a prophecy. At a time when the Balkan war had been settled and the peace of Europe seemed assured for a generation, when no Englishman in public life believed that there would ever be a war with Germany, at least for years, Professor Cramb predicted the war; that it would come speedily; that it would be the greatest war the world had ever seen, and that in its last analysis it would be a war not between Germany and France, and Germany and Russia, so much as a war between Germany and England, and he tells why in the most luminous way.

England has grasped all of the habitable portions of the globe that could be secured for colonies. Her great possessions encircle the earth, so that to-day her English-speaking colonies almost equal the mother country in population, and she governs two-fifths of the earth's surface and one-fourth of its population. Germany, seeking an outlet for the overflow of her population, seeking the mastery of the seas, is confronted and thwarted everywhere by England. Hence

the professor concluded that war between these two great powers for the ultimate headship of the civilized world was inevitable. Final mastery by either one may or may not come, but in its last analysis this conflict means something more than the acquisition of territory. It is the final test of two great systems of government and society—the collective and the individualist.

It is not only curious that this great world war should be waged by the two main branches of the Teutonic race, but it is still more curious that these two families of the same blood and of close kinship should have so developed, in their fifteen hundred years of separation, two systems so opposed, so antagonistic that they constitute the poles of human government.

Before tracing the reasons for this divergence of ideals it may be well to define what we mean when we speak of individualism and collectivism. You hear a great deal now of the German word *Kulter*, which means something quite different from the English word culture. The German word represents their ideal of collectivism. It means the whole German plan of society, the foundation, the corner stone and superstructure of the German state. With them the individual is nothing; the state is everything. An individual is a mere cog in the great machinery of the state. All individual initiative, all personal liberty, all personal choice or desire is subordinated to the collective spirit, to the despotic control of the state. While with the English, as with us, the state is merely a collection of individuals, and, as I shall endeavor to show you later, nowhere in the world has there been as lofty an ideal of individual freedom of government by law, of justice, as the English-speaking race has developed.

It may be worth while, then, inasmuch as to-day we confront in this country a contest between these two ideals, to trace the growth of these two systems; especially so when there seems such confusion of ideas regarding the subject among men highly placed. Professor Munsterberg, of Harvard, lately announced that the German immigrants came to this country to impose upon this country the German ideals and the German *Kulter*. Mr. Barnes, of New York, one of those progressives who views with alarm any legislative innovation later than the Mosaic code, responded to this with the charge that German collectivism would bring this country to anarchy. Inasmuch as anarchy is no government, and collectivism is all government, one may see how confusedly Mr. Barnes discusses this great question. The other day Senator Beveridge made the astounding discovery that the end of this war would see a great development of collectivism in Europe along democratic lines. Inasmuch as collectivism presupposes an autocratic government, we see that Mr. Beveridge is as far at sea as Mr. Barnes. So it may be worth while to go back and trace the growth of these two great branches of the Teutonic family and ascertain, if we can, why the one developed on the one path and the other followed another totally different.

As you are all aware, Europe was settled by three successive waves of immigration. The first great wave was the Celts; the second, the Teutonic; the third, the Slav. We do not know this from recorded history. We learn it from that imperishable thing, the language of these three stocks. We not only learn the identity of the different branches of these families, but we may trace their place of common origin somewhere on the slopes of the Caucasus and the central tablelands of Asia. We may trace there the habits, the oc-

cupations, and even the sociology, of the Aryan race before it separated into these three great families. The Celts were pushed by the successive waves of immigration into Brittany and the British Isles. The German wave fairly spent itself on the left bank of the Rhine. The first glimpse we find of the Germans is when the Romans came in contact with them. We say in contact, for Rome never conquered the Germans. Cæsar built a bridge across the Rhine, but never occupied the country. Varrus lost his legions there, and although Rome spread her arms and civilization over everything west of the Rhine and over nearly all of Britain, the Germans remained unconquered and untouched by her influence. These Germans, as we see them in the pages of the Roman historians, were the boldest, freest, most individual race that the world has ever known. The headship of the tribe or clan, whether chief or king, was an office, not a property. Power was not hereditary, but elective. Every free man and every free woman participated in the affairs of the government, helped make and wage war, and helped frame the peace that followed. Another curious thing: Nowhere else until that age, nor indeed for two thousand years afterwards, was woman's place as lofty as among the Germans. She stood shoulder to shoulder with her husband, his copartner in all the things of life. And when we, the other day, conferred suffrage upon woman, we but restored her to that position which she held in the Cimbric forests two thousand years ago.

Certain families of this great Teutonic race, in 446, crossed the narrow seas and conquered Britain, after Rome, menaced at home, was compelled to withdraw her legions. This conflict differed from every one made by the Germanic tribes, the Goths, the Vandals,

the Visigoths and others. These last, while they conquered France, Spain, Italy and North Africa, were themselves conquered by those whom they subdued. They adopted the arts and customs and eventually the effeminacy of their subjects, and gradually melted into the nationalities that they had overcome. Not so with the conquest of the Britains. There the Celtic inhabitants were either exterminated or driven into the mountain fastnesses of Wales and Scotland. This Germanic blood refused to mingle with any other, but flowed on undiluted, so pure that, in effect, the German to-day on the Rhine is not more German in blood than the Englishman of London. Nor would they adopt any of the institutions of the conquered, but brought with them their form of government, their religion and tribal customs.

Under the pressure of war the kingship gradually became more or less hereditary, but it was a loose heredity, frequently set aside by the people. The Folk-mote gradually ceased to pass laws, but its approval of the edicts of the king was frequently sought. The Wittenagamote, or council of the elders, continued to surround the king with their advice and counsel, but above all the Anglo-Saxons continued to be free men, and their government was a government of law and not of arbitrary power. The jury system gradually developed into something like its present form, and no man could be condemned except by the judgment of his fellows.

When the Normans conquered England a despotism was imposed upon the conquered country for a time; but the Normans, themselves of German blood, speedily melted into the mass of English people, and within two centuries the last sign of division between Norman and Saxon had disappeared. The national power that

conquered King John and extorted the Great Charter was led by Walter Fitz-Hugh, a Norman, the Archbishop of York, and a Saxon. It is of profound interest that the demand for the Great Charter of the English liberties was not a demand for something new and unknown. The demand was for "the laws of Edward the Confessor." It was a return to the Anglo-Saxon government of law and individual liberty, and when King John solemnly promised that he would not "send upon, disseize or banish any man without the judgment of his peers" he simply formulated in writing Anglo-Saxon law and custom that had existed for more than a thousand years. From that time, protected by its island isolation, the English continued to develop a government of individualism and the protection of the liberty of the citizen.

Edmund Burke, in one of his sublime speeches, declared that the whole state and power of England, its king, lords and commons, its army and navy, were established and maintained for the sole purpose of getting twelve honest men into the jury box. In other words, this great structure of government was simply for the purpose of giving the English people a government of law. Again, Burke, in describing the ideal of English justice, declared that it was such that it shall protect the liberty and life of the humblest Hindu on the banks of the Ganges as completely as the wealthiest nobleman of England in his palace on the Thames.

It was this individualism, this free, robust independence of thought and speech, together with its capacity for self-government developed and trained by the English constitution, that made the Anglo-Saxon the greatest colonizer that the world has ever seen. In a foreign land they developed their governing institutions on the same model as the mother country. Whether on the

James, the Plymouth Rock, in the wilds of Canada or of Australia, the free-born Englishman was his own master and governed himself. Those who formed our constitution were Englishmen, and Englishmen of a generation who were the greatest politicians that the world has ever seen. I do not speak of politics here in the sense of electing a county commissioner and the allotting of the county printing, but in the broader sense of state building and government. And the eighteenth century had produced the greatest masters of the science of government that either England or America has ever seen. These Englishmen who framed the American constitution perceived with astounding clearness of vision that the two great forces of the universe must be balanced and controlled in any successful government. In the cosmos the centrifugal force which holds the planetary system together is exactly balanced by the centripetal force which keeps the planets from plunging into the sun, and the balance of these two forces preserves the harmonious movement of the system. So in human society, the centrifugal force which tends towards despotism must be balanced by the centripetal force which runs towards anarchy and destruction. One or the other of these forces had therefore destroyed every republic that the world had known. Our forefathers devised the federal plan—a true planetary system—the centrifugal force of the federal government balanced by the centripetal force of the separate states, the states receiving from the central sun, the national government, their due proportion of power, their strength for protection, a common bond uniting all of them, but preserving their individual freedom, their individual existence, strong enough to prevent the central government from ever becoming a despotism. This balance, this check and counter-

check, have worked so wonderfully for 125 years, have so built up this country in power and glory while still preserving its freedom, have so fostered the spirit of individual liberty in America while maintaining a government of law and order, that he who would disturb this perfect balance—he who would either increase or diminish the centrifugal power of the federal government or the centripetal power of the state government; he who would change the representative principle, by which alone this balance can be maintained, into a pure democracy which would speedily destroy it—should stop and consider the laws of the universe and the history of the world.

Fifteen hundred years have elapsed since the Teutonic race separated into its two principal families. Those who remained behind suffered a far different fate from those who occupied the island fastness of Great Britain. Penned in between the Rhine, the Vistula and the Baltic, with scarcely an outlet to the open sea, surrounded by Frank, Hun, Slav and Swede, Germany has been the battle ground of Europe. At times, under the Hohenstaufen and the Ottonides, there was a semblance of German unity. Austria seized for a time the hegemony of the German race and established a mockery of the power of the Cæsars—"The Holy Roman Empire," which, as Voltaire says, was neither holy, Roman nor an empire. In truth it was a collection of fragments loosely held together by common interest, which Metternich well described when he said that Germany was merely "a geographical expression." Civil wars, mostly religious, desolated its fields and destroyed its cities. It was the plaything of European politics. States were established and destroyed, confederacies formed and dissolved, not by the will of the German people, but by foreign rulers. Out of the

ruck of petty German states Prussia finally emerged, and the Great Elector made himself the King of Prussia. The wars of Frederick the Great established the position of the Hohenzollerns, who have been, taken for all and all, the greatest succession of monarchs that Europe has ever seen. When Napoleon broke the power of Prussia, Germany was again plunged into anarchy; but out of the uprising against Napoleon grew the future greatness of Prussia, the Prussian army system, and, in effect, that wonderful machinery that we know to-day as the German government. So pressed upon on every side, trampled by the feet of warring nations, conquered by Hun and Slav and Swede and Frank, the Germanic people were inevitably compelled to submit to a despotic form of government. They realized that the collective spirit could alone save Germany alive. They had at their doors an object lesson of individualism carried too far. Poland, once the greatest monarchy in Europe, perished and its people were enslaved because of the lack of the collective spirit. The great Germans of the nineteenth century determined that Germany, in order to be free, must be strong and great. And the German people, with the memory of their terrible past before them, willingly consented to give up their individualism and to bend every energy to the molding of a state powerful enough to protect its borders and its own civilization. It is well-nigh impossible for any of us to understand with what bitterness the Germans look back on their past, when the Hungarian army under Tilly sacked their cities, when the Swedish armies under Gustavus dictated their policies, when as feeble a monarch as Louis the Fifteenth of France desolated the Palatinate, when their sons perished upon the Steppes of Russia, dragged at the chariot wheels of Napoleon, mere pawns

in the game of conquest that he was playing. Small wonder that they have sworn that, no matter what the sacrifice, never again shall German soil be desecrated by a foreign enemy if the German people, by whatever sacrifice, may prevent it. It is this outside pressure that has cemented the German character into that solid and enduring fabric of government that is to-day holding its own against all Europe.

It is this outside pressure and past humiliations that are the reasons for German collectivism, just as the freedom from outside influences and from foreign invasion has permitted the Anglo-Saxon individualism to reach its zenith. It can not be doubted that individualism is the natural, the wholesome and the best development of human nature. German collectivism is artificial, unnatural, and it is submitted to by the German people by force of necessity. That its leading writers set it forth as an ideal is not strange. The whole power of the monarchy, its government and its army is devoted to this ideal, and its publicists must preach and enforce this ideal or be silent.

As a test of the two systems it is well to remark that the collective system in Germany has produced no men of the first rank in art or literature. Goethe, Kant and Schiller have had no successors. Wagner was a product of the earlier individualism. Again, because of this collectivism, Germany has made a failure of every one of her colonizing experiments, while England has spread her colonies over all the habitable world, so that Webster described her as "that great power whose military posts encircle the globe, whose morning drum-beats, following the sun and keeping company with the hours, girdle the earth with one continuous and unbroken strain of England's military airs." Germany had at the outbreak of the war a few handmade, home-

protected colonies, each a complete failure. Separated from the home government, from the daily and hourly control and direction of an invisible central power, Germany's colonies have always failed. Hand in hand with the growth of German military power, under the collective system, has grown her material prosperity. While she has constructed the first army of the world and a navy second only to England, she is almost abreast with England in manufactures and in the race for the world's markets. Nor has there ever been anywhere on earth as many well-fed and well-clothed people under one flag, with as small a percentage of poverty, illiteracy or crime. It is a necessity of the collective system, where each is but a cog in the great machine, that each cog must be sedulously guarded and cared for, and this Germany has done with all of her people. On the other hand, England has discovered that too rank a growth of individualism becomes a crime. She has discovered, as we have discovered in this country, that to leave each individual entirely free is to permit the strong to prey upon the weak; to permit the man of first-rate capacity to exploit those of lower intelligence, and a form of collectivism, such as labor unions, coupled with child-labor laws and the like, has grown and is growing with accelerated speed every year. That is the conflict between collectivism and individualism that is going on in this country to-day and which Mr. Barnes says can not continue without endangering the existence of our government. A growing public conscience in this country has demanded better protection for the poor, the unfortunate and unfit. This is a moral, a social collectivism and has only a faint resemblance to the German *Kulter*. This collectivism might proceed, and will doubtless proceed, much farther than it has without in any wise im-

pairing the form of government handed down to us. With that form of collectivism I am heartily in sympathy. With each moral reform that lessens the unbridled power of the strong in order to protect the weak and helpless every man of heart and feeling should sympathize. Whenever this form of collectivism undertakes to disturb the foundations of our government, upon which the future of this country depends, when it assaults the safeguards that have protected the liberty of the individual, given us internal coherence and strength, and safety abroad, for one I must recoil. I can not follow upon that path—call me standpatter or what you will. For myself I perceive a clear line of demarcation between moral and social collectivism, and governmental and military collectivism. I am not willing, either, to abandon that individualism that has alone of all the races of the world successfully established and maintained self-government; that has made of England for five hundred years a beacon light of progress, the shelter of the oppressed of every race, the hope of the downtrodden nations throughout the world. I am not willing to abandon that individualism that has conquered the seven seas and to-day holds absolute domain over them; that has made the Anglo-Saxon race the paramount race of the world; that has conquered and to-day holds the fairest portions of the globe, holds them free and self-governing. I am not willing to abandon that individualism that has starred the English-speaking sky with names of imperishable glory.

Whatever may be the result of this war, I am not afraid of world dominion by Germany or any other race. Power that is racial, that springs from the soil, founded upon nationality, has endured and will endure; power that is imposed by an alien race upon others

bears within itself the seeds of decay. The history of the world from Alexander to Napoleon demonstrates it. There never has been and there never will be any world-conquering race. Whether in the material conflict that now desolates Europe, Germany or England shall be the winner, neither will dominate the world. The great problem for us in this day of change, of shifting alterations of public feeling, emotions and convictions, is to hold true to the governmental ideals that have proven themselves. We may experiment with sociology, but we dare not experiment with the foundations of the temple.

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